SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 18, as follows:

Extending this approach of the N=2 case, the forward recursion equation is then generalized to the N=3 case of FIG. 2(b) as in equation (12):

$$A_j^k = \max\nolimits^*_{i=0,1,\ldots,7}(A_i^{k-3} + \tilde{\Gamma}_{i,j}^k) \quad \text{for } j = 0,1,\ldots, M\text{-}1 \qquad (12)$$

where the combined branch metric is obtained by adding three individual branch ~~matrices~~ <u>metrics</u> from time k-3 to time k, and M is the number of states.